



## **House Finance and Taxation Committee**

**SB 2281**

**March 11, 2025**

Chairman Headland and Committee Members, I am Courtney Koebele and I serve as Executive Director for the North Dakota Medical Association. The North Dakota Medical Association is the professional membership organization for North Dakota physicians, residents, and medical students.

The North Dakota Medical Association supports HB 2281, increasing the state's tax on tobacco products. At its 2013 annual meeting, NDMA adopted a resolution supporting legislative action to raise North Dakota's tobacco tax as a proven way to prevent youth tobacco initiation, encourage a reduction of adult tobacco use, reduce health care costs, and provide an overall benefit to public health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Office on Smoking and Health, tobacco use health care costs in North Dakota amount to \$326 million per year.

Physicians are on the front lines trying to prevent and reduce tobacco use by counseling young patients not to start and supporting patients who have already started in their attempts to quit. Yet, they cannot do it alone.

Increasing tobacco taxes is one of the leading recommendations for states to use in preventing and treating tobacco addiction, particularly in adolescents. Therefore, preventing the uptake of tobacco use by making it less affordable is a better investment than waiting to treat smokers in adulthood.

However, according to the research it is important to recognize that tobacco tax increases will only reduce tobacco consumption if the increase is noticeable and beyond the range of being offset by tobacco industry discounts. In addition, it is important to ensure that the tax increases are equitable across tobacco products.

With the rise in youth e-cigarette use and increased smokeless tobacco use among rural populations, timely policy will be imperative to curb these growing health threats.

NDMA supports SB 2281. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.